

Cockfield Parish Council Meeting Report

The Parish Council met on Thursday 24th January 2013.

Under matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting, it was reported that the investigations into the siting and installation of a dog bin on Great Green are continuing.

The condition of roads around the village, and the number of potholes appearing, have been referred to the County Highways Department and will be followed up, along with the outstanding items from the highways review that was carried out in the summer. Our County Councillor, Mr Pembroke, requested details of these items in order to assist in progressing them.

Our Emergency Planning Initiative has commenced with actions being taken to identify emergency evacuation centres in the village and to establish the means of access and provision of initial assistance and comfort to evacuees.

Our PCSO sent his apologies for absence and his report was presented by the Clerk. Between 29th November and 20th January there has been one reported crime, that of criminal damage, in the village. The oil thefts have been confined to the school and the Police will continue their regular patrols of the village.

It remains necessary for everyone to remain vigilant and ensure that their property and possessions are kept secure at all times if we are to maintain the current low level of crime that we currently enjoy in the village.

The latest Safer Neighbourhood Meeting was held in Bildeston. Two major concerns were identified – an increase in crime in certain areas of Long Melford and the theft of catalytic converters from vehicles in Hitcham and Bildeston – these were identified as the priorities for police action in the immediate future. Bildeston are taking a number of actions to reduce speeds through the village and are also investigating setting up a ‘Speed Watch’ team (Lavenham now have the equipment for this and are also looking at setting up a team). The Cockfield representatives requested information regarding the portable speed indicator signs, but were advised that this should be pursued through County Highways.

It was pleasing to hear that the Safer Neighbourhood Team sees Cockfield as best practice at disseminating information to residents both through reports in Green Links, the village website, and the e-vine. (The e-vine is an e-mail based system, initiated and operated by Mr Hodge, which provides reports of criminal activity in Cockfield and the surrounding villages and also details forthcoming events – anyone who is not on the mailing list for this extremely useful facility should send their e-mail address to dhch@farmline.com)

The Safer Neighbourhood Meeting scheduled for 21st May will take place in Cockfield Village Hall.

Dialogue is continuing with Orwell Housing Association and Babergh DC regarding the provision of local needs housing in the village and the Parish Council is actively working on moving this forward.

The purchase of land and a further length of railway track at Earl’s Meadow continues to progress slowly through the legal processes and the Parish Council continues in its vigorous follow up with the County Council.

Mr Pembroke commenced his report by explaining the slow progress in the Earl’s Meadow project has resulted from cuts and rearrangements that have been necessary at the County Council. In seeking to protect vulnerable adults and children, other areas of Council activity have had to be reduced which has resulted in delays in handling projects such as ours.

He added that the County is required to find a further £27 million savings up to 2014. Further cuts to internal costs will be required and the project to outsource Highways is continuing. When questioned on the

amount of reserves held by the County, he explained that the reserves were divided into service reserves, which are required to cover peaks and troughs in spending, and capital reserves which may only be spent on capital projects and are thus not available to cover day to day expenditure.

Our District Councillor, Mr Arthey, reported that work is continuing on the District budget and that there may be no increase this year. It may be of interest to residents that the issue of free parking in the Babergh District has raised its head again during discussion of the budget.

The District Council has adopted the Cross Green Conservation Area report which was presented at the September Parish Council meeting in the presence of a group of village residents.

The textile collection scheme has produced a steady 20 tonnes per week in Babergh District through the blue bins. It has been noted that this scheme has raised awareness of the value of recycled textiles and charitable organisations have noted an increase in donations.

It was emphasized that textile bags should be left at the top of the blue bins to enable the refuse collectors to know to leave a replacement bag – should anyone not receive a replacement, bags are available at the Post Office.

Don't forget we also have a village textile collection scheme 'Phil the Bag', which provides valuable income to the school and everyone is encouraged to support.

The efforts of Highways Department in clearing the roads during the recent winter weather were praised by the Parish Council, as were the efforts of the refuse collectors who have provided a good service in difficult conditions. It was noted that collection of brown bins has been disrupted as the contents, being organic material, are not collectable when frozen. However if, during this period, a bin is not emptied at its normal time, leave it out until the collection is made.

The Parish Council then discussed the precept for 2013/2014. In establishing this, we considered, in addition to everyday expenses, other once off expenditure which will be required in the coming year. The additional land at Earl's Meadow has mandatory requirements for securing the area, which will be covered by the precept, and which will ensure that the area remains a beneficial asset for the village for years to come; work is required in the children's play area on Great Green and also on the Pavilion, and the driveway in the cemetery requires resurfacing. The Council believes that it is essential that we face up to the responsibility of protecting the village's assets and the precept has been set taking this into account.

The Village Hall Committee reported that it has received donations from residents and organisations in the village and the District Council towards the renewal of the chairs in the Hall, but was still short of its target. The Parish Council agreed to make a donation of £500 out of the Village of the Year prize fund to assist in meeting the target.

Mr Williams reported his intention to recommence Earl's Meadow work parties once the weather improves.

The Green Committee reported that Mr Williams has repaired the bench on Great Green using timber which was supplied by Mr Wells, to whom thanks were expressed.

It was noted that the remaining benches require some attention and suggested that it would be helpful to find a volunteer to help in this.

The replacement trees on Great Green were planted with the help of Mr Williams and Mr Creasy who were thanked for their efforts.

In the absence of a report from the Pavilion Committee, it was agreed that an up to date condition report should be prepared in order to determine work priorities.

The Cemetery report, in addition to the need to resurface the centre driveway, advised that when the

weather improves work will be carried out on the gates and gateposts. It was also noted that the cemetery is now 90 years old!

Concerns have been expressed regarding the condition of the Abbey footpath – a local working party has been arranged for 2nd February.

The annual village litter pick will take place on the week end of 23rd/24th March.

The annual Parish Meeting will take place, in the Village Hall, on 25th April at 7.30 pm.

The next Parish Council meeting on Thursday 28th March 2013.

The Council may be contacted through the Clerk, Alan Morgan on 01284 828072.

RJP